

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T CAPE TOWN 0556

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: US, UK, RH, SF, PFOR
SUBJ: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH IAN SMITH

REFS: (A) STATE 080423, (B) STATE 080424

1. SUMMARY: IN MET WITH IAN SMITH TODAY, APRIL 14, TO STRESS OUR SUPPORT OF THE OWEN MISSION. DURING THE HOUR-LONG DISCUSSION, SMITH WELCOMED THE US ROLE, SAID HE HAD BEEN IMPRESSED BY OWEN, AND EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO PURSUE THE LATTER'S PROPOSALS SERIOUSLY. ASSERTING THAT MUCH CLARIFICATION AND CAREFUL GROUNDWORK WOULD BE REQUIRED, SMITH EMPHASIZED THE QUESTION OF PARTICIPATION BY TERRORIST GROUPS COULD BE A STUMBLING BLOCK. HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES WARNED THAT CONTINUING EXTERNAL PRESSURE ON RHODESIA WAS HAVING A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON THEIR ABILITY TO BRING WHITES ALONG IN THE EFFORT TO SOLVE THE RHODESIAN PROBLEM. END SUMMARY.

2. AS INSTRUCTED IN REFTEL A, I MET WITH SMITH THIS MORNING, APRIL 14, TO underscore OUR SUPPORT OF THE OWEN MISSION AND OUR CLOSE CONSULTATION WITH THE BRITISH IN THE PREPARATION OF THEIR PROPOSALS. PRESENT WITH SMITH VER VAN DER BLY, JACK GAYLARD AND HAROLD HAWKINS.

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SMITH SHOWED SPECIAL INTERST IN US ROLE IN PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE WHICH HE REGARDED AS HEARTENING NEW ELEMENT. HE ASKED ABOUT NATURE OF THIS ROLE, AND I TOLD HIM WE WOULD CO-SPONSOR THE INITIAL CONFERENCE, SEND A STRONG DELEGATION AND PLAY A ACTIVE ROLE.

3. SMITH SAID HE WELCOMED THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS THE OWEN

PROPOSALS, A "NEW DEVELOPMENT WHICH MIGHT GET OFF THE GROUND". RHODESIA WAS "SERIOUS, DETERMINED AND ENTHUSIASTIC" ABOUT IT, THOUGH MUCH PREPARATORY WORK HAD TO BE DONE. THE PROPOSED US ROLE WAS IMPORTANT. IT WOULD HELP ASSURE PROGRESS RATHER THAN WASTAGE OF TIME WHICH COULD NOT BE AFFORDED.

4. THOUGH HE HAD MANY CRITICISMS OF THE PAST BRITISH PERFORMANCE, SMITH SAID HE HAD BEEN IMPRESSED WITH OWEN AS A MAN WITH AN OPEN MIND. HE CONSIDERED THE FOREIGN SECRETARY "SERIOUS, STRAIGHT-FORWARD AND DEDICATED TO TRY TO HELP" REACH A SETTLEMENT.

5. THE PROPOSALS BROUGHT BY OWEN, SMITH SAID, WERE NOT VERY CONCRETE; NOR DID OWEN APPEAR TO BE ENTIRELY CLEAR IN HIS OWN MIND ABOUT WHAT HE HAD SET OUT TO DO. SMITH CONSIDERED IT ESSENTIAL TO START AT THE WORKING LEVEL WITH A SIFTING OUT ALL THE FACTS AND AREAS OF AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT TO ASSURE THE BEST POSSIBLE CHANCE OF SUCCESS. HE SAID VENUE WAS NOT A MATTER OF CONCERN, THOUGH HE WAS PLEASED OWEN THOUGHT GENEVA INAPPROPRIATE. AS TO TIMING OF THE WHOLE PROCESS ENVISIONED BY OWEN, RHODESIA DID NOT WISH TO DRAW IT OUT ANY LONGER THAN NECESSARY. THERE WERE PROCEDURES, SUCH AS THE REGISTERING OF VOTERS AND DEFINING CONSTITUENCIES, WHICH PLACED LIMITS ON THE SPEED WITH WHICH ONE COULD MOVE. (SMITH FOUND OWEN POORLY BRIEFED ON PROCEDURAL AND MECHANICAL REQUIREMENTS.) COMPOSITION OF THE PROPOSED CONFERENCE COULD CAUSE A PROBLEM, SMITH
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SAID. RHODESIA HAD BEEN MISLED AT GENEVA WHERE TERRORISTS WERE REPRESENTED AND PANDERED TO BY THE BRITISH. HAD HE KNOWN THIS WOULD BE THE CASE, HE WOULD NOT HAVE AGREED TO THE GENEVA MEETING. RHODESIA WOULD PROCEED VERY CAREFULLY IN THIS RESPECT THIS TIME. IN THIS CONTEXT, SMITH EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER BRITISH FAILURE TO RECOGNIZE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ZUPO, "THE MOST POWERFUL, PEACEFUL ORGANIZATION ON RHODESIA".

6. SMITH STRESS IT WAS MOST IMPORTANT TO AVOID AROUSING UNWARRANTED EXPECTATIONS AND TO PRESERVE THE CONFIDENCE OF WHITES IN THEIR OWN FUTURE IN RHODESIA. WITHOUT SUCH CONFIDENCE, THEY WOULD ABANDON RHODESIA TO CHAOS. VAN DER BLY, SUPPORTED BY THE OTHER THREE, SPOKE OF HOW "INFINITELY MORE DIFFICULT" IT WAS TO BRING ALONG THE WHITE COMMUNITY WHEN FORTHCOMING MOVES BY RHODESIA WERE REWARDED BY "FURTHER TURNING OF THE SCREW". AGREEMENT TO MAJORITY RULE, FAITHFUL ADHERENCE TO THE KISSINGER PROPOSALS, AND ADOPTION OF THE LAND

TENURE AMENDMENT BILL, FOR EXAMPLE, HAD BEEN MET WITH REPEAL OF THE BYRD AMENDMENT AND "WITCH HUNTS" ON THEIR REPRESENTATION ABROAD. SMITH SAID IT WAS ON THIS ACCOUNT HE HAD SUCH A NARROW MARGIN IN SECURING ADOPTION OF THE LAND TENURE AMENDMENT BILL. IN ADDITION TO THE 12 RHODESIA FRONT MPS WHO OPPOSED HIM ON THIS ISSUE, THERE WERE OTHERS ON THE VERGE OF WITHDRAWING THEIR SUPPORT AS WELL. IF THE WHITES ARE PROVOKED MUCH MORE, VAN DER BLY SAID, THE BACKLASH COULD NO LONGER BE CONTROLLED.

7. SMITH URGED THAT WE USE OUR INFLUENCE ON THE FRONT-LINE LEADERS TO PERSUADE THEM TO PRACTICE WHAT THEY PREACH. THEY ADVOCATE NON-INTERVENTION AND PEACEFUL TRANSITION TO MAJORITY RULE IN RHODESIA BUT CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE TERRORISTS. SETTLEMENT WOULD HAVE BEEN REACHED YEARS AGO IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR EXTERNAL PRESSURES.

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IM SMITH ALSO MADE AN APPEAL FOR A LIAISON ARRANGEMENT WHICH WOULD PROVIDE A MEANS OF AVOIDING MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT RHODESIA AMONG US LEADERS. HE SPOKE OF HAVING SUCH CONTACT WITH BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE. I RESPONDED THAT THE CHANNEL THROUGH HAWKINS WAS AVAILABLE AND WORKING WELL. HE NODDED AGREEMENT.

9. AT THE END OF OUR MEETING SMITH AGAIN EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS THE OWEN MISSION. HE HOPED WE WERE PERSUADED OF HIS SINCERITY AND THE READINESS OF HIS GOVERNMENT TO GO OUT OF ITS WAY IN COOPERATING WITH US TO ACHIEVE A SETTLEMENT. I TOLD HIM WE ALL HAVE RESPONSIBILITY TO PUT OUR BEST EFFORTS TO FIND A PEACEFUL SOLUTION.

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